

Aleks KURGVEL

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Knowledge of foreign languages.

- A) By 1940 I was fully fluent in:
- 1) Estonian, my native tongue;
 - 2) Russian;
 - 3) German, and
nearly fluent in
 - 4) French.

This fluency was based upon the study of these languages in different schools in Estonia under different political systems of government, according to which the majority of the subjects during my school years were taught either in Estonian (for 10 years), in Russian (for 5 years) or in German (for one year). In addition to those years I had Russian, French and German as special subjects for 5 to 7 years.

Some fluency in Estonian and Russian was a prerequisite for my admission to the Estonian Military Academy in 1923, where at this time some subjects were still taught in Russian. Full fluency in Russian and in German was a prerequisite for my admission to the Estonian Academy of General Staff in 1929. Oral and written tests were administered.

My fluency in those languages was deepened through the extensive use of these languages, as well as of English, during my work in the G 2 of the Estonian Armed Forces H.Q.s, 1934 - 1940.

My German was further improved through my stay and work in Germany, and with the German Armed Forces during 1940 - 1945. Also 1946-1953. In Russian I have had some practice through all the years up to now. At present I am able to follow and to understand easily different presentations, oral as well as written, in Estonian, Russian, and in German, and to translate from and into these languages. Due to the professional exposure to partly very low level writings in Russian and in German during the last three years, I sometimes have to use dictionaries to check the spelling of some words in those languages.

I have had no real practice in French since 1940. However, I hope that I could refresh my knowledge easily if this would be necessary.

- B) 5) Finnish I learned the practical way, during my stay in Finland in 1941, for approximately 5 months, and during later shorter stays there, the last in 1944. I was able to understand and to speak about general matters. Finnish being very close to Estonian, it would not be difficulty for me to learn more of it in a short time if necessary.

- 5) Continued.
By now I am able to translate from Finnish making frequent use of a dictionary.
- 6) Polish I can read and translate with the help of a dictionary, and I do understand some spoken Polish. I have attended a course given by a Polish Military Attache (Captain Radomsky, Assistant Mil.Att.) before 1937.
- 7) Ukrainian I can read and understand to some extent due to my good knowledge of Russian and some knowledge of Polish.
- 8) Belorussian is less understandable to me than is Ukrainian. I get the idea of the matters described in the letters.
- 9) Danish I had to learn a little in the course of work during 1961-62.
- 10) Latin I had in the Estonian Gymnasium for three years. This helps me in learning and understanding the Romance languages. (For my final dissertation in the Academy of General Staff I used some Italian sources.)

Sten Kungu